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W. H. Van Voris

The Provisional *IRA* and the Limits of Terrorism

THE PROVISIONAL IRA is the best known of several guerrilla terrorist organizations active in the six counties of Northern Ireland. It was formed in 1970, and its members claim to be true heirs of the original Irish Republican Army that between 1919 and 1923 used terrorism against British rule in Ireland to win a measure of political independence for twenty-six of the thirty-two counties. Politically, the Provisionals want a federal, "socialist" Ireland but are somewhat vague about what they mean. As militants they have proved themselves skillful, resilient and aggressive.

The British government has moved against them with army units, local police and a new border militia. Since 1972 the Irish and U.S. governments have cooperated with Britain. Nevertheless, arms and an estimated half million dollars annually are sent to the Provisionals from American sympathizers. Even though the Irish government interns those Provisionals it can find, Provisional recruits are still trained secretly in its territory. The British army last year made 71,914 raids on houses in the north, but during that time the Provisionals claim more than half of the 3,500 bombs exploded in the province. When they extended their campaign to England, Britain had to deal diplomatically with them for a cease-fire. Most of the Provisionals are drawn from about five hundred thousand Catholics in the north. The Catholic hierarchy has sharply condemned violence and praised the Provisionals for a cease-fire, but all signs indicate the Provisionals are about to start their campaign again.

In spite of appearances, I hold that the Provisionals are defining the limits of guerrilla terrorism much as the original IRA dramatized the strength of the strategy. I will illustrate this thesis by transcriptions of interviews tape-recorded during the last three years.

First, some background. Guerrilla terrorists make unpredictable strikes and avoid confrontation with their enemies; they aim to destroy an enemy with his own emotions of confusion, exhaustion, fear and

despair. The more publicity the terrorist gets the more he hopes to arouse these emotions. A British army officer summed it up for me, "If you throw a bomb in a pub, it's of no military value, but the effect it has on the press, the radio and the population is immense." The guerrilla terrorist needs only light arms, and explosives are ever more readily available to him. They can be made very cheaply out of ordinary products, such as fertilizers or weedkillers and sugar. Even grated cheese can be made to explode. Above all, the terrorist needs a friendly populace to lend invisibility that is his only armor. This reliance on a segment of the population involves him in intergroup conflict. Within his own group he pretends to be and often is, a counterterrorist. In places where two populations have traditional polarization, such as between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, Jews and Arabs in the Middle East, Turks and Greeks on Cyprus, the terrorist has a situation in which he can thrive.

Modern democratic governments are particularly vulnerable to guerrilla terrorism. If a regime must be seen to tolerate dissent in order to keep power, it dares not exterminate the nonmilitant citizens among whom the terrorists hide. Police are usually ineffective among that population, the field hardware of its army is far too powerful for selective fighting, and each instance of overkill antagonizes the populace and makes the terrorist more secure.

During the mid-sixties in Ireland the old IRA had been so split by internal feuds that its leadership adopted Marxist theory, cooperated with a tiny local Communist Party, and some Catholic middleclass reformers in a civil rights campaign. The Catholic minority in Northern Ireland had inherited a tradition of Irish nationalism, but the British welfare state offered better health care, education and unemployment benefits than the Irish government in the South. But as a politically impotent minority in a province controlled by Protestant Unionists, Catholics suffered discrimination in jobs, housing, representation in local government and had found no redress in the courts or provincial legislature. At the same time the Unionist government was trying to modernize the appearance of the province and had alienated its own ultra-right wing. Demonstrations and riots to the left and right of that government produced a vortex of sectarian hysteria in August, 1969. Hundreds of Catholic homes were burned, thousands fled, there was retaliation against Protestant communities, the police collapsed, and the British army was called in to keep peace. Before it came, Catholics cried for help from the IRA but it had sold all of its guns to Welsh

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nationalists. A few old IRA men fought off Protestant mobs with some hidden weapons, and they angrily split from the Official IRA by January, 1970, and revived the old cry, "Unite Ireland by force."

A Provisional officer comments upon the recruitment during this early period.

Before the split the republican movement was very strict. If you had a criminal record or if you were a drunk every Saturday night, you had no chance. You were scrubbed. You had to have a high standard of morals and Christ knows what else. But after '69 people didn't give a damn as long as you were prepared to man a barricade, throw a stone, learn how to shoot a rifle.

But the Provisionals hold together, they're disciplined. There have been lapses, but the lapses have been so rare that the media has been able to latch on to them. And there are various kinds of punishments, right up to getting shot dead or a kneecap job as they call it here, shot through the kneecap down to dismissal. There's a bit of stigma to being dismissed.

This rough and tumble recruitment and punishment indicates the early weakness of the Provisionals. They were placed in small pockets within Catholic districts, and at one point the British army hoped to get their cooperation in policing their areas, but the Provisionals had too much distrust of the army and too little strength. They did begin to receive funds from sympathizers in the U.S. and the South through a legal Sinn Fein office in Dublin. When short of cash, they robbed banks.

The Catholic community as a whole did not welcome this revival of militant nationalism. At the polls Catholics were voting their old nationalist politicians out of office, and a new Catholic party was being formed by moderates such as John Hume, pledged to secure power-sharing in the government and a more just distribution of wealth. What protected the Provisionals was the ancient code of a polarized people: Thou shalt not inform. I got a lesson in this from a landlady when I mentioned meeting two of her lodgers at a Provisional club.

The great curse of Ireland is its drunkards and informers. There was a child born here today with its eyes rolled straight up. He couldn't see out of them at all. Sometimes, you know, the eyes might be to the left or right a bit, but these were straight up inside his head. It struck me in a flash that my grandmother used to say, "That child's grandfather was an informer."

Aye, two boys here were the same, with their hands stuck almost up to their shoulders. The girls of the family were all right now, but the boys had

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their arms bent double. They took them to doctors, and the doctors didn't know what to make of it. But it's the grandfather, you know.

Q: You mean the sins of the grandfather are visited on the children?
It's the curse of them that were wronged.

One advantage the Provisionals had over the Officials, who had tied themselves to a Marxist interpretation of history, was the freedom to manipulate their own past into myth. A Derry priest comments.

The IRA obviously came into existence because of the stupidity of Unionist officials and the British army.

There's a great danger of creating myths about the Provos, what they achieved and how principled they were. They created a myth that they were defenders of the people. That's a lot of bunkum. The people defended them. The IRA has no right to talk about how they kept the British army at bay. It was the people who kept the British army at bay.

There are myths growing up about the Provisionals and there is great danger of giving them too much recognition. As a movement, or revolution, it was not all spontaneous, a lot of it was pre-planned. Two guys came into the city one Sunday night and used firearms for the first time, to my mind to provoke an incident which would result in an escalation of violence, which happened. The next week the army shot two lads of seventeen or eighteen, and from then on, you have violence begetting violence, recrimination against recrimination, blame against blame, the innocent always suffering.

Groups usually need a measure of opposition to grow. After recruiting what vigilantes they could in their own enclaves, the Provisionals discarded their defensive role and deliberately tried to provoke unjustifiable response from the army. Their provocations might have been merely another irritant and not a cause. The Officials were also arming as were Protestant militants, and such groups erode confidence in the state's ability to cope and hence prompt overreaction.

Throughout the province there was a steady drift from concern with reform to law and order. In the spring of 1970 a bewildered and clumsy army imposed a curfew on Catholic areas and began crashing into houses in search of arms. They caused some spontaneous riots; other young rioters were deliberately trained by the Provisionals. Catholic relations with the army changed from affection to verbal abuse, to rock throwing, to petrol bombs and on to grenades. There were a few assassinations of army personnel and when IRA members were killed there were massive military funerals.

On August 9, 1971 the Unionist government received permission

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from Westminster to impose internment without trial or charge or term on suspected militants under the Special Powers Act. That act had been designed against the old IRA but had been renewed. Catholics felt that its renewal had been used to intimidate them and the abolition of the act had been a key demand in the civil rights campaign. When the army seized more than three hundred men, almost all of them Catholics, many innocent men were taken, and internment fell heaviest on the Officials, who were known.

The Catholic community responded with riots as if war had been declared upon them. The feeling was confirmed on January 30, 1972 when during a banned demonstration to protest internment thirteen unarmed demonstrators were killed by the army. Resistance to internment took several forms, but one of them made the Provisionals a major force. It also determined their politics as essentially the politics of despair. A public health nurse comments on the aftermath of the riots.

I was working up the Falls Road and people were saying, "The army were in this morning," or "The army were in in the middle of the night," and I thought, "Well, it might die down." Then somebody said, "They're going to bring in internment." I thought, "Oh, no, it would ruin the place if they did." I honestly didn't believe it would happen.

On the ninth of August when internment was brought in, my supervisor said not to go up the Falls. I allowed myself to be dissuaded and was sent to Sandy Row for three weeks. Well, when I went back it had changed. The whole attitude of the people up the Falls had changed. The streets were all dug up, the windows boarded up, and there was suspicion of anybody strange on the street. Every house you went into had an injury or the men had been lifted, or the sons. And the people were just deflated. It was terrible. I think it was worse than blowing the whole place up. All the feeling anybody might have had about the government just went down the drain overnight.

Then when I went up to what I thought was sort of a good middle class area, teachers, bank clerks, this sort of thing. Even them, men had been lifted, school teachers who taught in some of the Catholic secondary schools had been lifted. And in those areas, people who could have been sensible about it, and maybe done something before, just totally rejected everything that ever happened in Northern Ireland because of internment. And you know there is a very good health service, and very good education and all the rest of it, but because of this internment, nothing British was ever good. If I said I worked for the Corporation, that was it. I had to get around it by saying I came from the clinic. I suppose because the British army were the ones that lifted the men. I did see the soldiers, some of them were just barbaric the way they went into some of those houses.

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So the people just got lower and lower and the morale got less and less, and then suddenly the IRA was their only hope, it really was. You know if the army came and wrecked your house who could they complain to?

They maybe saved for years to buy their own houses. Suddenly they had nothing. There was nobody, not even the MPs that could give them any satisfaction. Naturally they turned to the IRA. They would defend their area and what they had they could keep. I think it was quite natural to follow them. And you've got a lot of the young fellows who had no recreation or anything else, it was like a whirlpool. They were all swept into it in an effort to defend the area. I suppose the Official IRA always had their own attitude, but the Provisional IRA definitely grew up from internment, and overnight. It was dreadful but there was nothing anyone could do about it.

The women have suffered an awful lot. Their sons have been interned, their husbands have been interned, and their houses have been burned or ruined, and there's younger children in the house with nowhere to play, and the women are left just like islands on their own. And they are getting very fed up with the whole situation, and nothing will ever convince them that the present system is right. But they're really afraid to reject the IRA, it stands between them and the soldiers.

Maybe it's a psychological dependence they have on the IRA. They're not necessarily the good, brave boys but the IRA is something to believe in, that at least you'll be safe as long as they're in existence.

And there's suspicion. Two areas, Catholic and Protestant where I work have never had a fist-to-fist conflict, the women were relatively friendly, but internment spoiled that to a big extent. A lot in the Catholic area thought that maybe some of the ones from across the street had informed on them and it broke down at that time, very much so. "She was in my house the other day, you know, and this is what started it." I saw it happening and there wasn't a thing you could do.

On August 9, three hundred forty-two men, most of them Catholics, were "lifted" by the British army for internment. By mid-December one thousand five hundred ninety-two had been interrogated, nine hundred thirty-four released and the others interned in damp, overcrowded wire and tin traps called camps. Nearly every arrest affected a large family and a larger circle of friends and neighbors. A milk delivery man, who was not an IRA member, but potentially valuable as a source of information to police and army, refused to give it, but gave instead a stance of outraged morality to the Provisional terrorists. It is precisely such high moral tone that the guerrilla needs to sustain his campaign.

The first time I was picked up we were all in bed and around about half

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two or three in the morning, the door was nearly knocked in. My wife dashed down, and before I had time to get dressed the soldiers were upstairs and all over the place with rifles.

They searched around the house and found nothing, then said, "Right, you're coming with us." I said, "Not at all, I'm not coming." I think it was a sergeant in charge of them, and he said, "Well, if you don't come peacefully you're going to come out feet first." They started to put on their gas masks and of course our kids panicked and began screeching and all, so that was it. They never give you no reason whatsoever. I just assumed it was because I was a Catholic and had sort of nationalist ideas and reckoned that Ireland is big enough to rule itself.

I was sitting with our kids. We have seven. The soldiers were standing around with rifles but I wasn't allowed to stand up. I had the baby on my knee and the kids were all around me, so I said, "This is an example of British democracy. You're witnessing British democracy here. What's happening is that they're in searching our house and terrorizing us. I never want you kids to forget it as long as you live." And I reckon they won't forget it. This is one thing indelible in their minds. Now they have seen just what is right and what is wrong.

Visible oppression against an Irish Catholic community which places particular emphasis on the virtues of dedication and self-sacrifice, creates a new hierarchy of the abused.

The young Provisional below was on the run in the south. He told me about tortures during numerous interrogations, but these were not mentioned with any self-pity; they were credentials of authority.

It's quite an honor really, but I was beaten by the head of the Special Branch, Harry Taylor. I'll be able to tell me grandchildren that. He came into a room and said something in Irish, and I returned a phrase in Irish that means "Kiss me behind," only it's a wee bit stronger than that. So he brought me outside and beat me with a huge big stick across my back until he broke it. I was on my knees crying out, "Jesus, Jesus!" and he was saying "Jesus won't help you here." Then two policemen took pieces of the stick and tried to strangle me with it and kept me against a wall until the sweat was breaking off me.

It is precisely such a hierarchy of the abused that leads Provisionals and those closely associated with them to use the word "moderate" as a term of contempt.

The Provisional intelligence officer quoted below suggested we meet at a popular restaurant in central Belfast for lunch. When I arrived, the street outside was crowded with soldiers, but he sauntered in from

the kitchen precisely on time and held a newspaper up as if reading it was his only disguise. He then took me by a rodent's maze of back rooms and alleys to his favorite bar. He had no need to stress the slow inefficiency of army patrols on all sides of us. The occupants in the rooms through which we passed showed a tense and deliberate disinterest; he could place a bomb wherever he wished.

This was in July, 1972, and by that time Provisional bombs and assassinations had stimulated the Ulster Defense Association (UDA), largest of the Protestant paramilitary groups. Terrorists apparently linked to it had begun gliding through darkened streets gunning down Catholics. The Provisional officer treated all his enemies with disdain. Their growth had produced a kind of four-sided war; a cold war with the Officials, a hot war with the British army, and a war that flared on and off with the UDA. All these enemies only tended to cluster the Catholic community more tightly around the Provisionals.

The successful guerrilla has to know every street, everybody in it, every back entry. A guy in the First Battalion may never know who the guys are in the Second Battalion or the Third. And he would never be allowed to operate out of his own area. That's how they're successful. It's the same in the Bogside, but take the men out and put them in Belfast and they'd probably be picked up in five minutes.

With internment day last year, when the Officials held their hand (I think the intention was that the Provisionals would engage the army and get wiped out) there were large numbers of Officials who defected to the Provisionals. They'd been trained all along to fight repression; well, August 9th was the most blatant example of it.

Before the split in August 1969, there were only forty members in the city of Belfast and there was only one battalion. Since '69 in the Provisionals you have three battalions and something like one thousand nine hundred volunteers at the moment, people who have done basic weapons training and things like that. That's in Belfast, I don't know anything about Derry.

In frustration, one of their brigade staff members shifted sides. You heard what McGuinness said when they told him the Officials were stopping their offensive; he said, "When did they ever start?"

The whole purpose of our strategy is to keep the army guessing and bog them down just trying to protect property. We keep them running, there's always the possibility that when one bomb goes off a second or a third can go off. They're not so stupid, they want to keep out of the way.

Some say we help the recruitment of militant ultra-Protestants. Well, there's a fascist dimension that's been there. I remember last year when they marched out of the shipyard, eight thousand of them calling for internment and getting it.

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The fact is that if a section of the Protestant working class sides with the enemy, it is the enemy. So does this mean we should be held to ransom? Should we avoid civil war simply so that we won't antagonize people who keep us in opposition? What does the revolutionist who accepts physical force do, does he try to accommodate himself to the establishment or does he help tear the whole fucking system down and rebuild it? You can't bomb any of their own buildings downtown. Their only targets can be people, so it's assassination and all these mystery killings of the last three months. Sometimes they get one of our men but that doesn't stop us.

Unlike the army, if you lose key men you can easily replace them. You learn very fast on the job. So internment, when there were slips and they picked up key men, it made no difference whatsoever. As each month goes by we get stronger. This week has been a catastrophe for the army.

People have even said that it is a good thing that some of our key men were picked up because it destroys the rigid hierarchy of the security forces. They can only act in the old way, can't do anything new and don't know what to do when something new happens. It means that younger recruits have responsibility though this has been the cause of some of our mistakes.

But you can't run an urban guerrilla organization like this one by rules laid down in a book. The British army brought all the batsmen and the balls and thought that we would fight them fair. We won't fight them fair. We don't have all the sophisticated weapons of death they have at their disposal. We fight as the occasion demands, so if it means ten soldiers going up in smoke, well, each one is wearing the uniform of British imperialism, and we're out to destroy that whether it's a uniform or bricks and mortar.

If you allow emotion and compassion, your liberal conscience will get the better of you and you'll just go away and do nothing. But British imperialism never had a liberal conscience, this is the lesson we have learned from them.

The following exchange took place between two Catholic girls in Belfast.

A: I know a family who doesn't want to support anybody because they don't like the guns. But the neighbors are putting pressure on the whole family from the mother downward to the kids. That's in Andersonstown. If they don't rattle their bin lids to warn the neighbors of a police or army raid, someone comes to the door and tells them they were responsible if the men were injured.

B: Ah well, you get that a wee bit. We don't live in a Catholic area, we live in a Protestant area. We give to the Orange Widows' Society. When they come around, my mother always says under her breath, "The more Orange widows, the better."

Internment also brought into the Provisionals industrially trained technicians. This is an excerpt from a detonation expert.

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For car bombs the main explosives are chemical fertilizers mixed with some other chemical and detonated by a charge of gelignite [a commercial explosive]. The easiest chemical to get is diesel oil mixed with the fertilizer. That gives off a lot of smoke but the materials are inexpensive and they can't stop making them. I have one formula I've used, and I got it from an advertisement on how to make a pond in an English farm magazine. It was being published in the magazine up to 1972. You can also use nitrobenzene instead of diesel oil. That has a bad reputation because some people have gotten very sick using it but you have to treat it like carbon tetrachloride or acid or any other dangerous chemical. When you read of a 100 or 200 or 400 pound car bomb, that's a fertilizer bomb.

There's been a great effort put in on systems. One type is chemical; acid or mercury eats through a zinc case, falls down and makes contact. You can judge the time by the thickness of the metal: 10 minutes, 1 hour, 2 hours. Once you set up a chemical system you're pretty sure it will work. The disadvantage is that it's not very accurate. Temperature and humidity can change the timing. But these types are standard in the British army and the Russian army; they were used in Algeria and we have borrowed from them.

Clocks use an electric system. But there have been numbers of people blown up with clocks. You have to be fairly meticulous with them. Early on, people were relying on the alarm to make the contact, when the alarm went, the bomb went. But you know how it is with clocks, if you rattle one the alarm sometimes makes a single sound, "bedoom," like that. A contact.

Inevitably a bombing campaign brings its horrors. A young man in a pub told me:

Today I had to identify a body; it was from a blast and it had no legs. Most of it wasn't there and the face looked like it had been under a steam-roller. I just stood there. I thought I recognized the looks but I couldn't tell. The man said, "Say yes. Who can tell? Say yes." So I signed the form. It was a terrible blast. One head was found two blocks away.

Protestant or Catholic bomb makes no difference, the result is traumatic. Both communities suffer, particularly in working class areas where people have the least to lose.

But the concern here is with the limits of terrorism that has continued unchecked after the provincial government fell in 1972 and has extended its range of action to England.

The cost of maintaining a campaign is apparently considerable to the Provisionals and according to Northern Aid, the main Irish-American society gathering money for the Provisionals, the contributions from the United States are falling, and the disturbed Southern Irish govern-

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ment is no longer tolerant of the Provisionals. Nevertheless, there are always banks and payrolls, and few agencies could resist nineteen hundred heavily armed men. According to the Provisionals the cost to Britain for compensation is so much higher, their campaign is well worth their investment. Finances are not a necessary limitation to a large, aggressive and apparently successful terrorist group.

What is a practical concern is the well-being of their own community. The larger the terrorists grow, the more need they have of that protective community. Consequently the Provisionals have not severed those fragile lines that supply the cities with food, fuel and water. In a military sense, their campaign is cosmetic. One British engineer who had been in charge of repairing rocket damaged blocks in London during World War II told me the whole bombing campaign was, from an engineer's point of view, "only of major nuisance value." In 1974, a Protestant group seized control of the electrical stations and with the cooperation of the community simply turned off most of the switches that keep the modern state running. That action brought all transportation and supplies in the province to an abrupt halt and showed they had far greater power than the Provisionals had been able to achieve by all of their bombing and shooting. It was after this that the Provisionals increased the bombing campaign in English cities, where each bomb received the attention of half a hundred bombs in Belfast.

The main limit to terrorism is its divisive character. Perhaps an exasperated and debt-ridden Britain will ultimately withdraw its claim from Northern Ireland, but each sectarian side has been so scarred and emotionally traumatized that a united Ireland which the Provisionals want seems out of the question.

Paradoxically, another limit is that the terrorist can be caught in his own machine of terrorism, that he must go on causing terror if he wishes to keep control of his own community. The following model was given by John Hume, a moderate Catholic politician.

The tragedy is that each side is anchored to a basic emotional position and as you move toward the center from that position you get much less militant. But there is, in fact, the same emotional strand running through the whole side though it is held more fiercely by some than others. When the feelings rise, the level of emotion rises right into the center. Then everyone is involved, which means that it is always extremely difficult in a political situation for people at or close to the center to deal with their own militants in political terms because they are always facing the emotional argument. Inci-

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dent after incident is thrown up; it's very difficult to stand up and say, "The only way to stop those things is to stop the war." You have a civil war situation, things happen, people get shot.

Hume's model suggests also that by evoking moral and emotional issues the Provisionals and their sympathizers find themselves in conflict with other agencies in their own communities, particularly their church. The following argument illustrates Hume's implication. These two young Catholics both came from approximately the same area but met by accident at a pub near the University.

A: They can pick anybody up. A lot of people out at Long Kesh don't know why they're there. Special Powers takes away the basic right of being innocent until proven guilty.

B: What if you can't prove anything? If an IRA man comes up for trial, you're not going to get anybody to say I've seen him doing something something, such and such. You'll not get it if the witnesses are Catholic. I don't like internment, but if it were carried out properly in the right sort of manner, in a sense I'd agree with it.

A: There's no such thing as carrying out internment in the right manner. Internment is wrong and that's all there is to it. Go right back to the Magna Carta, internment removes the basis of the judicial system.

B: Go back to the Ten Commandments, thou shalt not kill. The IRA can kill, and they can get away with it.

A: But you must ask yourself what the IRA is fighting for. From 1969 when the government was seen to side with those oppressing Catholics, the IRA grew in strength. They were the only defenders of the people, so now they can't be uprooted until there's justice in this country.

B: There was a pub at the top of our street blown up because it wouldn't pay protection to the IRA. If you think you're going to get justice from the IRA you'll be sorely mistaken, you'll have gang rule.

A: I prefer to take my chances with the IRA before I want Stormont [the former government of Northern Ireland] back.

B: Are you making it a choice between legal injustice and illegal injustice?

A: You're saying they are two equal forces, but I'm saying one grew out of the injustice of the British army.

B: It's all our own people is getting it.

A: No matter how many times they blow up or shoot, the IRA has never inflicted torture like the RUC Special Branch and the British army have done.

B: What about the Abercorn disaster? Two young girls lost their legs, lost their arms. It's the innocent people suffering.

A: There are people who have been in Long Kesh and tortured and you know where they are today? In a mental institution. They haven't lost a leg or an arm; they've lost their minds and for life. Ask any doctor if he can

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examine anyone at Long Kesh to help them. No. All medical and spiritual help is denied them.

B: Somebody gives you a hit on the head, you give him two back and he gives you three, et cetera. That's what's happening. It started off with rocks, then the CS gas, then rubber bullets, then setting up barricades, then bigger rocks, and now guns.

A: Stormont slowly and surely moved the army around until it was like the Specials and the RUC. The IRA have been our only defense. They have to fight so that it will never happen again, never happen again.

B: It's happening all the time.

A: You think you can't defeat the British army? Well, in Cyprus they were defeated and in Aden they were defeated. Any colony in which the British army has to fight they are defeated by inferior forces, the ordinary people.

B: The other day a UDR man was taken out and tortured and shot. Are you saying that ordinary people are doing that? What if that were your son?

A: What about my brother who's in Long Kesh? He was made to run over an area of ground with broken glass in his bare feet, had a gun at his head and a rope around his neck and was trailed behind a Saracen. Had it not been for the IRA, Stormont would still be here today.

B: The reforms were coming through quite well until the IRA got the guns. Catholics had world opinion and everything until the IRA started their campaign.

Here is a schoolteacher in a Catholic girls' school pulled apart by her commitments to Republicanism and to her church.

The students say, "Miss, you're told by the IRA not to go into town, and if you're told and you go, it's your own fault if you get bombed." I say, "That's beside the point. I'm entitled to go into town. I'm not exchanging one dictatorship from Stormont for another dictatorship. I want my civil rights to do as I please."

It's terrible to see how the younger ones are maneuvered. When the IRA shot at two policemen who had stopped a car and missed, and a young girl of seventeen, who was in a chemist's shop buying cosmetics, was shot dead. Well, if you put that to the children and say, "Murder is murder. The British army should not have shot the two women in the Lower Falls, they should not have shot the three men in Newry just for robbing a bank, because they were judge, jury and executioner. This was wrong. Therefore, the IRA is also wrong. They shot when civilians were about who could be injured." The children say, "Oh, Miss, Miss, that wasn't the IRA, that was the UVF trying to get the IRA a bad name." They only believe what they want and don't want to blame the IRA. "Oh, Miss, they didn't want to hurt that baby or shoot that old lady. It was an accident."

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You see, the school is in a district that has suffered an awful lot more than we have. It's in the Marrowbone, the parish of the Sacred Heart and joins up with the actual Ardoyne. The bulk of the students leave at fifteen and go into the Beltex mill at the corner, like their mothers and big sisters. That suits them very well, but they have suffered during the troubles. They've had aunts and uncles burned out and brothers and fathers taken off. The point is that the IRA defended the area with only a couple of sawed-off shotguns or something, just as it defended my area.

I don't know how many are actually in republican organizations, but I think the boldest ones are in the Cumann. Last week I sent three or four to the back of the room for talking, and instead of looking hangdog about it, they lined up, feet apart, hands behind their backs as if practicing as honor guard for the next funeral. It's the young ones that are IRA mad and the ones with the low IQ.

I criticize some of the things the IRA have done when they should have shown better sense, but I would never criticize them in public. Maybe it's some kind of emotional blackmail they have on me, but I owe them so much. And yet sometimes I also resent that they have put me in that position. My old ideal of the IRA is so shining, I think they ought not do the things armies must do. It taints my childhood dream. You know, the definition of a rebel is someone who's against the government, but my idea of a rebel was someone who was a hero and it wasn't until I grew up and read the dictionary that I realized my idea of a rebel was different from what most people have. I think the best is when one of them escapes. That's better than bombing or killing; that really hits Britain in the eye. I lift my head a little bit higher as I climb up the hill past the Crumlin Road Jail with my package of books. I don't mind about the walk or the soldiers, I am free.

In religion classes I play the devil's advocate and say there's high unemployment in Glasgow and Durham and that's why the men are in the British army, to take care of their families. And I defend the church, but the bishop hasn't been out to the jails since the time he pleaded for the army to come in, and he hasn't been back since he gave a confirmation speech. Oh, it was a lovely sermon for about ten years ago. It was all about little children coming to God and loving God, and while he was talking we could hear the drums of the Protestant extremists marching up to Stormont. Then there was an electricity strike and we were all frozen and he went on and on. The children criticize the cardinal and the bishop for not coming down, and I explain that they have to be diplomatic, but I think the children are right. The cardinal comes from Dover Street and knows what it's all about.

He did speak out in '69 when Faulkner said the Catholics should stretch out the hand and he said, "If you take the boot from our necks we might be able to stretch out our hands." But since then he has said very little.

I keep saying that I'm not going to get involved and that I'm fed up with politics, but you find yourself saying your piece the same as everyone else.

Limits of Terrorism

I can see the nationalist position on the thirty-two counties, and on the other hand I can see Michael Collins' point of view that when the Irish people have suffered enough they ought to take stepping stones to freedom. I can see why the Protestants do some of the things they do and why the British army is here and what the IRA do, but then I react emotionally and am very much a nationalist republican. I'm fed up being kind to the Protestants who have had it their own way for fifty years, yet I don't like violence so I can never commit myself to the IRA.

Everything I say or everything I think is on one of these planes or another. I try to be calm and rational with the children, but they wouldn't know it was me if they heard me talking with my brothers. I become completely emotional about the whole thing, the old Celtic mysticism starts coming out, then I start hating myself and hating Ireland for breeding those feelings in me. Mother Ireland takes her choice and Mother Church takes her choice and what's left for me to choose from?

There seem to be moral limits to terrorism, or at least a variable emotional limit felt to be moral. If the terrorist kills wantonly, his own community can recoil from him. The Provisionals make a point of warning or seeming to warn civilians before a bomb goes off, and despite all the errors and neglect, the murder rate of Northern Ireland during the crisis has been less than that in any of our ten largest U.S. cities. But this moral dimension nevertheless makes the terrorist vulnerable to vicious bombs that are disguised as his own, and the same media on which he relies for amplification of his attacks can sentimentalize his victims and make him appear to be another enemy. It is this technique that Bernadette Devlin believes will destroy the Provisionals.

The people who are responsible are the governments, are the systems. The Provisionals are a reaction to it. In that sense they are reactionaries, but they are fighting in their own way.

At the moment their campaign loses more support than it gains them and it's time they gave up. If they kill a British soldier (which I'm personally not opposed to; I don't like to see kids in the British army dying but I can see the war logic there) the odds are against them because you can rest assured that the *Daily Mirror* will have the wedding photograph, the graduation from the army school photograph, the story about how his mother has only one eye and how his father died in the Second World War, he lives in a council flat, and how he's just like the rest of us. You're beaten, because every mother who reads it sits there and says, "Why didn't they kill that rotten soldier that just came in here?"

If the government would just have given the people what they'd asked for, or even if they hadn't given it to them, if they had just allowed them

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to ask. That's what started the whole campaign. It was not that the people couldn't have what they wanted, but the people discovered that they couldn't even ask.

Most people never thought they were living in ghettos until they were beaten back into them, and then they discovered why all their neighbors were Catholics. It didn't dawn on them. They just thought maybe the Protestants didn't like living there. And among your own, well, where better could you be? And the school handy, and the chapel handy, and in case of an emergency the mother and the mother-in-law handy, in your own closely knit community. And it was a community, not a ghetto until the police arrived. That's what makes the difference. It's not the people in it that make it the ghetto, it's people that draw the line around it.

The imaginary lines that divide one community from another are not limits to a terrorist. He derives strength and protection from them; supplies and recruits are more readily available in an embattled community. If he has solved his practical problems of internal discipline and logistics his ultimate limit lies paradoxically in his success. For the greater his power with gun and bomb the greater will be his personal identity with them and the greater his reliance on his weaponry. Politics, with its compromises, deals, laws, rearrangements, tends to deprive him of his power; hence the ultimate limit on the terrorist is that he is really making war on politics itself.